

# Republicans and Democrats Clash Over Sanctuary Policies in Blue States

Democrat governors from Illinois, Minnesota, and New York defended their policies and condemned the federal government's handling of Los Angeles protests.



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul arrive for a hearing with the House Oversight and Accountability Committee at the U.S. Capitol on June 12, 2025. Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images



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As protests and riots against federal immigration enforcement continue, governors of sanctuary states testifying before a congressional committee stood by their policies that critics say protect foreigners here illegally over the safety of U.S. citizens.

Democrat governors JB Pritzker of Illinois, Tim Walz of Minnesota, and Kathy Hochul of New York testified before the Republican-led House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on June 12.

The Democrats condemned Trump's calling in the National Guard and military to support federal law enforcement and claimed that the protests were mostly peaceful.

The governors said that they cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in removing criminal illegal immigrants but not illegal immigrants who abide by the law.

On the other side of the political aisle, Republicans focused on how sanctuary policies resulted in the release of dangerous criminals and illegal immigrants, costing taxpayers billions of dollars.

Committee Chairman Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.) accused the three governors of obstructing federal immigration enforcement by enacting policies that "shield criminal illegal aliens" from deportation.

"Let me be clear, sanctuary policies do not protect Americans. They protect criminal illegal aliens," Comer said during the hearing, with photos of criminal illegal immigrants arrested in the states of the three governors as a backdrop.

Ranking member Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-Mass.) said Trump created the tensions in Los Angeles because federal agents were no longer just targeting criminal illegal immigrants.

"Trump isn't focused on getting violent criminals off our streets. He's terrorizing our communities to fulfill deportation quotas with fathers and mothers, grandparents and kids," he said.

## **Blaming Trump**

Walz argued during the hearing that Trump made the situation on the ground in Los Angeles more dangerous by not coordinating the National Guard deployment with local and state governments.

Hochul said that while she was in favor of a secure border, Trump's militarization of Los Angeles over the objections of Gov. Gavin Newsom was "a flagrant abuse of power, short of an assault on our American values."

Pritzker argued that Trump inflamed protestors when he bypassed local law enforcement and deployed the National Guard.

## **Mostly Peaceful Protests**

Democrat committee members used the opportunity to portray the protests that started in Los Angeles and spread to other cities as peaceful.

Rep. Robert Garcia (D-Calif.) said more than 500 people showed up at the protest in Long Beach, California, without incident.

“There was no vandalism, there were no arrests, and it was peaceful,” he said.

Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.) also spoke about non-violent protests.

“All over the country, people are protesting non-violently [against] President Trump’s treatment of immigrants,” she said.

However, widespread damage, looting, and assaults on police have occurred in Los Angeles.

On June 11, [White House](#) press secretary Karoline Leavitt said more than 330 illegal immigrants were arrested for being involved in rioting in Los Angeles over the past several days and that they would now be deported from the United States.

## **Criminal Illegal Immigrants**

Each governor said that while they may have sanctuary-like policies, they cooperate with federal authorities when it comes to removing criminal illegal immigrants.

However, Republicans zeroed in on specific New York cases where criminals were released in an attempt to show that while the governors may claim to support the removal of criminals, in reality, their policies prevented it.

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) detailed one case where an illegal immigrant—who assaulted a resident with a machete, choked a police officer, and assaulted a corrections officer—was released from local jurisdictions in New York, although ICE had a final order for deportation.

Jesus Romero Hernandez, a Mexican national who returned to the United States after being deported seven times, was arrested and held in Tompkins County Jail, Jordan said.

But Hernandez was released from the New York jail on Jan. 28, although ICE officials said they could pick him up in less than two hours.

Hochul countered that she had no control over local jurisdictions, only state law enforcement.

But Jordan cited a New York Times article last month quoting Hochul condemning local law enforcement that worked with immigration officers.

“We have some counties that are renegade counties and work with ICE,” Jordan said, quoting Hochul.

## Costly ‘Neighbors’

The Democrat governors were clear that they didn’t want illegal immigrants who were adhering to state law and contributing to the community to be deported by ICE.

Republicans pressed the governors on the cost of providing basic services to illegal immigrants attracted to their states by sanctuary policies.

Rep. Byron Donalds (R-Fla.) pressed the governors of New York and Illinois to provide exact figures on how much money their states spent supporting illegal immigrants versus legal residents, and both declined to give exact figures.

Pritzker said only that his state “keeps track of our budget” and that it is “balanced.”

Hochul did not dispute Donalds’s assertion that New York spends around \$4 billion on illegal immigration, but said in her statement that they “don’t keep track of individuals based on their status.”

“What we spend on immigrants, the immigrants who are here, working hard to live a life and working on our farms and taking care of our parents in nursing homes and taking care of our children, they have been coming here for 400 years,” the New York governor said.

“And we don’t keep track of individuals based on their status.”

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